

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Businesses in Your Home: Home Occupations Allowed in Residential Zones

Updated September 15, 2006

Home occupations which do not require any permits from the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), are allowed as accessory uses in residential zones in Seattle, subject to certain conditions.

In both single family and multifamily zones the following regulations apply:

- The home occupation must be conducted by one whose principal residence is the home or unit.
- The home occupation must be clearly incidental to the use of the property as a dwelling.
- The address of the home occupation may not be given in any advertisement or other media. Addresses may be given on business cards, as long as the card also states that business is by appointment only.
- For child care,* only one person not a resident of the dwelling unit may work for the home occupation.
- Certain home occupations, such as child care and bed and breakfast*, must be conducted only within the principal structure and not within any accessory structure, except for parking of vehicles where normally permitted in the zone. Home occupations, besides the two mentioned previously, are generally permitted in detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs).

* Other provisions apply to bed and breakfasts, addressed at right and on page 2 of this CAM.

- No outdoor storage is permitted in conjunction with the occupation, and the only allowable exterior evi-

dence of the occupation may be child care* play areas or other outdoor features normally associated with residential use, such as normally allowed parking.

- A maximum of two passenger vehicles, vans or similar vehicles are permitted to operate in conjunction with the occupation.
- The occupation is limited to one commercial delivery daily Monday through Friday, and no commercial delivery is permitted on Saturday, Sunday or federal holidays.
- A home occupation may not cause or add to on-street parking congestion or cause a substantial increase in traffic through residential areas.
- The occupation must not produce odor, dust, light and glare, electrical interference or other similar impacts extending beyond the property line of the lot where the occupation is located.

** NOTE: Anyone planning to operate a child care other than a Family Daycare Home, by Department of Social and Health Services definition, should request and read carefully DPD Client Assistance Memo 108, "Requirements for Operating a Day Care in Seattle."*

Signs

Illuminated or non-illuminated signs that do not exceed 64 square inches in area are allowed.

Alterations to Structures

Interior and exterior alterations consistent with the development standards of the underlying zone are permitted.

Bed and Breakfast Establishments

Bed and Breakfast establishments are governed by rules different from other home occupations.

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The following conditions apply in **both single and multifamily zones**:

- New bed and breakfast establishments are permitted in single family homes and multifamily units that are at least five years old.
- A license for the bed and breakfast must be secured from the City Department of Finance.
- There shall be no evidence of the bed and breakfast from the exterior of the structure, except that a modest sign is allowed.(SMC 23.55.020.d1).
- Bed and breakfast establishments must provide parking—one space for the dwelling unit and one space for each two guest rooms.
- The bed and breakfast may operate only within a single dwelling unit.
- The bed and breakfast may only be operated within the principal structure, not in an accessory structure.
- No more than two persons not residing in the dwelling unit may be employed in the bed and breakfast establishment.

In **single family zones** the following **additional** conditions apply:

- The bed and breakfast must be operated by an owner with at least 50 percent interest in the dwelling unit, and the owner must reside in the structure.
- The bed and breakfast may have no more than five guest rooms. (This limitation does not apply to bed and breakfasts which were established on or before April 1, 1987 and have been in continuous operation since that date.)
- Any lot line of property containing any proposed new bed and breakfast use must be located six hundred (600) feet or more from any lot line of any other bed and breakfast use.

In single family zones, neighborhood mitigation provisions are also required, and must be included in an operating plan distributed to all property owners within 300-feet of the proposed bed and breakfast as part of the application process. These provisions include::

1. The owner will make public transit information available to patrons, and the owner's operating plan must describe how the transit information will be made available to patrons.
2. The design of the structure in which the use is located and the orientation of the access will minimize impacts, such as noise, light and parking, to neighboring structures.

3. The owner's operating plan includes quiet hours, limits on programmed on-site outdoor activities, and parking policies to minimize impacts on residential neighbors.

4. The delivery of goods and services associated with the bed and breakfast use are accommodated at a time and in a manner that will limit, to the extent feasible, impacts on surrounding properties.

Animals

Businesses involving the keeping of animals have special rules outlined in the Seattle Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code, Section 23.44.048).

Getting More Information

If you anticipate operating a business out of your home and are unsure whether the Land Use Code allows it, you may either:

- (1) Check the language in the Land Use Code, Section 23.44.051.
- (2) Visit the DPD Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., to discuss your plans with a land use planner. Land use planners are available M/W/F, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., and Tu/Th, 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

NOTE: Due to the complexity of Seattle's Land Use Code, and the importance of providing you with the most accurate information that specifically addresses your situation, DPD staff does not answer questions on this topic by phone.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.